Heritage Newsletter

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BW in numbers

At the last check British Waterways owned in England and Wales :

- 1,650 locks
- 55 tunnels
- 3,095 bridges
- 413 aqueducts
- 97 reservoirs

British Waterways

BW heritage advisers volunteer alongside the guild of brick layers

The remains of an old brick kiln stand beside the Oxford Canal at Fenny Compton 'Tunnel' in Warwickshire. The Oxford was one of the earliest canals to be built in England, having been authorised in 1769.
The kiln dates from around the mid 19th Century and was supplying the surrounding area with bricks of various types until World War One when demand dwindled. Production ceased in 1917 and the kiln was abandoned. It lay derelict and by the start of the 21st Century was virtually hidden from view by vegetation.

In 2010 The Guild of Bricklayers approached British Waterways offering their services to restore the kiln. A partnership agreement was signed and so far approximately 75% of the plant growth and tree roots have been removed from the structure, but there is still plenty of work to be done before restoration of the brickwork can proceed.

On Saturday 5th November, heritage advisers from across the BW network spent the day lending a hand to the Guild of Bricklayers as they prepared the site for mothballing through the coming winter.

Practical training days

Over the summer months, BW staff attended practical lime mortar training in various parts of the country. These events, organised by Judy Jones with local support, were delivered by the Heritage Craft Alliance Ltd for the benefit of operatives undertaking the NVQ3 Heritage Skills assessment.

In addition to these, two practical lime mortar training days were organised for the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

The training was delivered by Rocket Masonry. The volunteers worked on a boundary wall that was in need of repair.

Finally, May Gurney and some of their sub-contractors benefited from an awareness and practical training day at Hatton.

GOLDEN RULE

Ensure your work complies with the Approved Process for Heritage Works.

Previously known as 'Heritage Standards' these have recently been revised.

Volunteer work benefits from financial support from English Heritage

A group of community volunteers have been working with BW to refurbish and maintain the 'at risk' Hanwell flight of locks in London.

So far the volunteers have clocked-up more than 300 hours work repainting fences, clearing vegetation, clearing rubbish, installing animal ladders and improving a path for visitors to the site. The works are financially supported by English Heritage which helps towards the cost of delivering such events. Local residents have demonstrated an amazing enthusiasm, working in all weather and always in good spirits. The Brent River and Canal Society is looking at developing a website to support the project. It is a very rewarding and encouraging experience especially as this is a long term project with lots of potential.

Winter Stoppages Open Days

This winter, members of the public will be getting up close to BW's important winter conservation work with public open days at 17 different canal engineering sites across the country. Visitors will have the opportunity to see first-hand the care and attention that forms part of this year's £50,000 'winter works programme'. The canal open days will showcase the unique craftsmanship and engineering skills needed to keep the nation's historic locks, bridges and aqueducts in working order.

The national maintenance programme includes the replacement of over 100 handcrafted British oak lock gates. The Open Days, sponsored by May Gurney, are taking place across England and Wales between October and March. For information of your local open day please visit www.waterscape.com/canalopendays

Stirling Castle hosts canal heritage workshop

Twelve BWS and TWTS colleagues convened in Argyll's Lodging in Stirling on 26 October to take stock of the needs of the heritage in our care and work out priorities for the organisation post-separation.

Scotland Director, Steve Dunlop, would like to see heritage conservation embedded into BWS's goals, priorities and measures. Colleagues agreed that *'Heritage is intrinsic to what we do'*. Senior Heritage Advisor, Sabina Strachan has been collating its outcomes and looking into external funding opportunities. Historic Scotland laid on a welcome tour of the recently refurbished palace at Stirling Castle to round off the day.

Record fine for unauthorised demolition

A record fine of £80,000 plus £42,500 costs has been awarded for the unauthorised demolition of an unlisted £1m Victorian house in the Trafalgar Road Conservation Area of Twickenham, south-west London.

In the case of Royal Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council v. John Johnson, the Judge made some helpful comments about the importance of retaining original historic fabric as opposed to creating a replica, and spoke of the contribution that individual buildings make to the character of a conservation area.